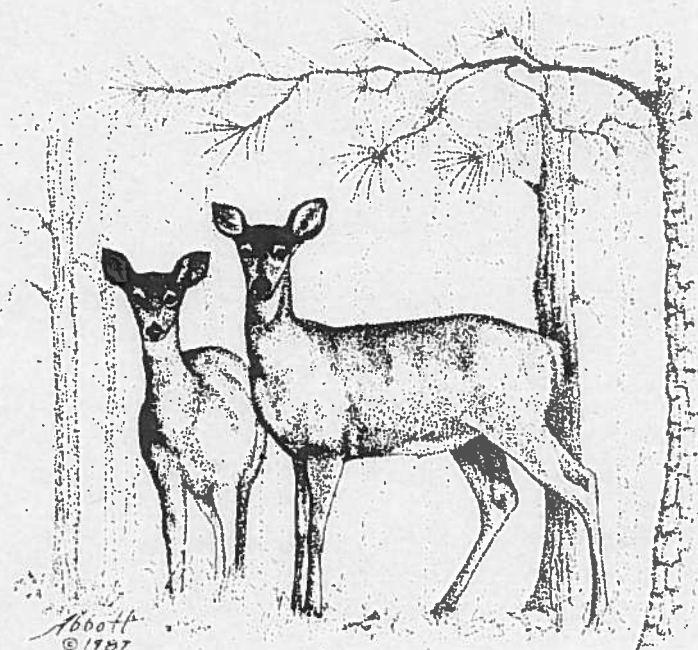
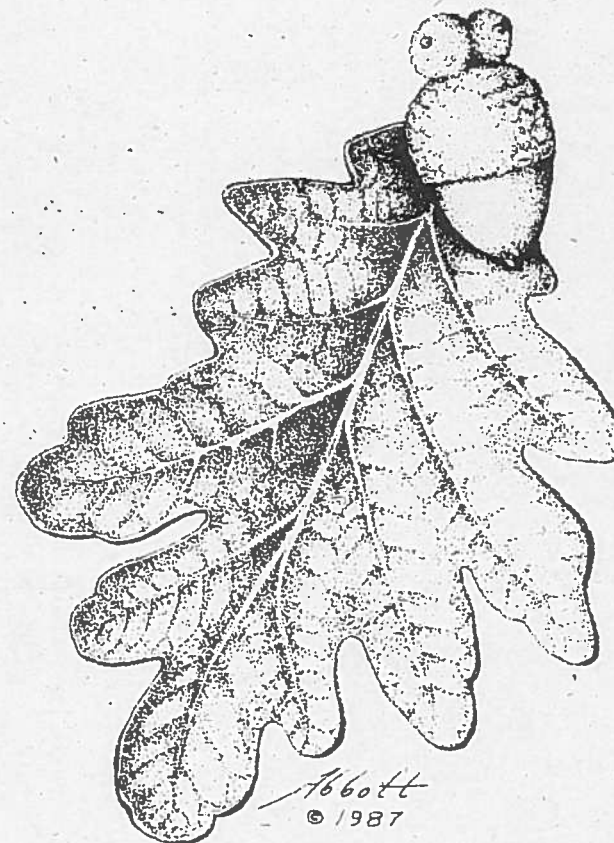


## WHITE OAK NATURE TRAIL



## WHITE OAK NATURE TRAIL



*An Introduction to the  
Natural Resources of*  
**NEWPORT NEWS PARK**  
Newport News, Virginia

## Welcome to Newport News Park

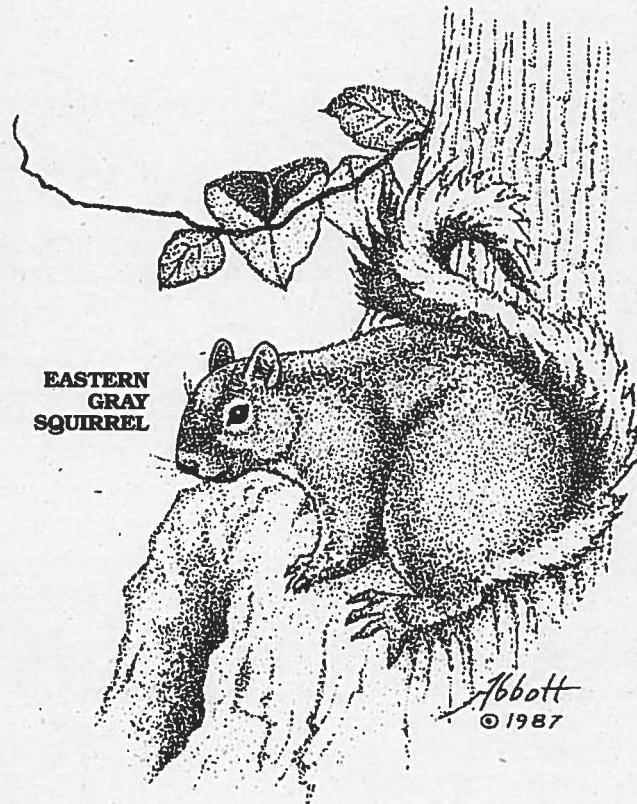
- All trails are open sunrise to sunset.
- Bicycles, horses, and motorized vehicles are not permitted on the White Oak Trail.
- Do not destroy or remove natural or historical resources. Permits are required for any collection activity.
- Litter receptacles are available at trailheads.
- All pets must be leashed (8' maximum leash), and removal of pet waste is required.

Call

**757-888-3333**

*(Newport News Park Campsite Office)*  
**for assistance while visiting the park.**

**For emergency assistance  
call 9-1-1.**



The White Oak Trail is a 2.6-mile self-guided trail. Numbered posts along the trail indicate points of interest explained in this booklet.

### 1. WHITE OAK

The white oak is one of eleven types of oaks found in the park. It has flaky, pale-gray bark and leaves with rounded lobes. Its acorns are an important food for wildlife, and its durable wood was used to make and repair large wagon wheels during the Civil War.

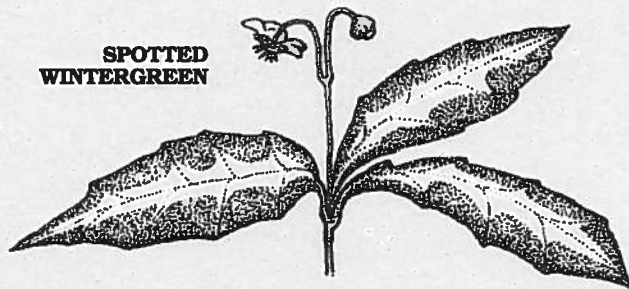
## 2. REMINDERS OF WAR

Along the White Oak Trail – and throughout Newport News Park – you’ll notice Civil War earthworks. These long mounds of earth and trenches were constructed during the spring of 1862 and are silent reminders of a battle that took place where you’re standing today. Please remain on the designated trail and do not climb on or disturb the soil or vegetation around the earthworks.

*For more information about the Battle of Dam No. 1, visit the exhibit in the Newport News Park Discovery Center.*

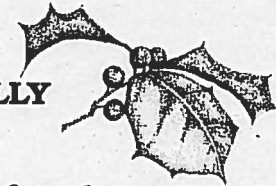
## 3. BRIDGES AND OVERLOOKS

Wooden bridges and overlooks are located along the White Oak Trail to provide a safe, dry passage over the many streams and wetland areas. Most of these structures are numbered; if you have a question or concern along the trail you can use the bridge numbers (as well as the trail marker numbers) as a reference for park staff.



## 4. HARDWOOD FOREST

Oaks and hickories are the dominant trees in this forest. The wood of these trees is harder than that of pines, thus the general name “hardwoods”. Many of the large, mature trees that once grew here are gone – felled by Tropical Storm Isabel in 2003. New vegetative growth has begun on the sunny slope.



## 5. AMERICAN HOLLY

Hollies are generally found growing in shady areas under much larger trees. Shiny green, spiny-margined leaves make the holly easy to identify. The small white flowers of spring are seldom noticed, but the tree is famous for bright red fruits that appear in autumn and winter.

## 6. SYCAMORE CREEK

This creek is named for the sycamores that grow along its banks. About mid-way across this bridge you can see a large sycamore tree on your right; check out its beautiful bark pattern. Sycamore Creek is a “wet-weather” stream – only visible when we’ve received rainfall. Look along the muddy areas for tracks of raccoon, deer, and herons. Check the tree branches for owls, hawks, and songbirds.



DEER TRACKS



## 7. THE CHANGING FOREST

You'll notice a change in the types of trees of this forest. Just a few stops back you saw oaks and other hardwoods; now the forest contains many more pines. At your feet you'll see a thick carpet of pine needles. Above your head, even during winter months, you have a canopy of green needles. On wet or humid days you'll notice the scent of pine in the air.

## 8. PINES OF THE PARK

Loblolly and Virginia pines are the most common pines in the park. Directly behind this post you see a Virginia pine - sometimes called a scrub or spruce pine. It has short twisted needles, usually in bundles of two, and its bark is flaky. Just to the right of the Virginia pine, on the opposite side of the trail, is a loblolly pine. The leading commercial pine in the southeast, the loblolly is used in lumber and paper production. It has longer, straight needles, usually in bundles of three. Its bark is thick and block-like. Look up to the treetops and see how the needles of these pines differ. Pick up needles scattered on the ground and see if you can determine what type of pine they fell from.



## 9. BLUEBERRIES

Small shrubs cover the forest floor throughout this area of the trail. Many of these are wild blueberries. Fruits appear in mid-summer. Please leave the fruit for park wildlife to enjoy!

## 10. DOWNED TIMBER

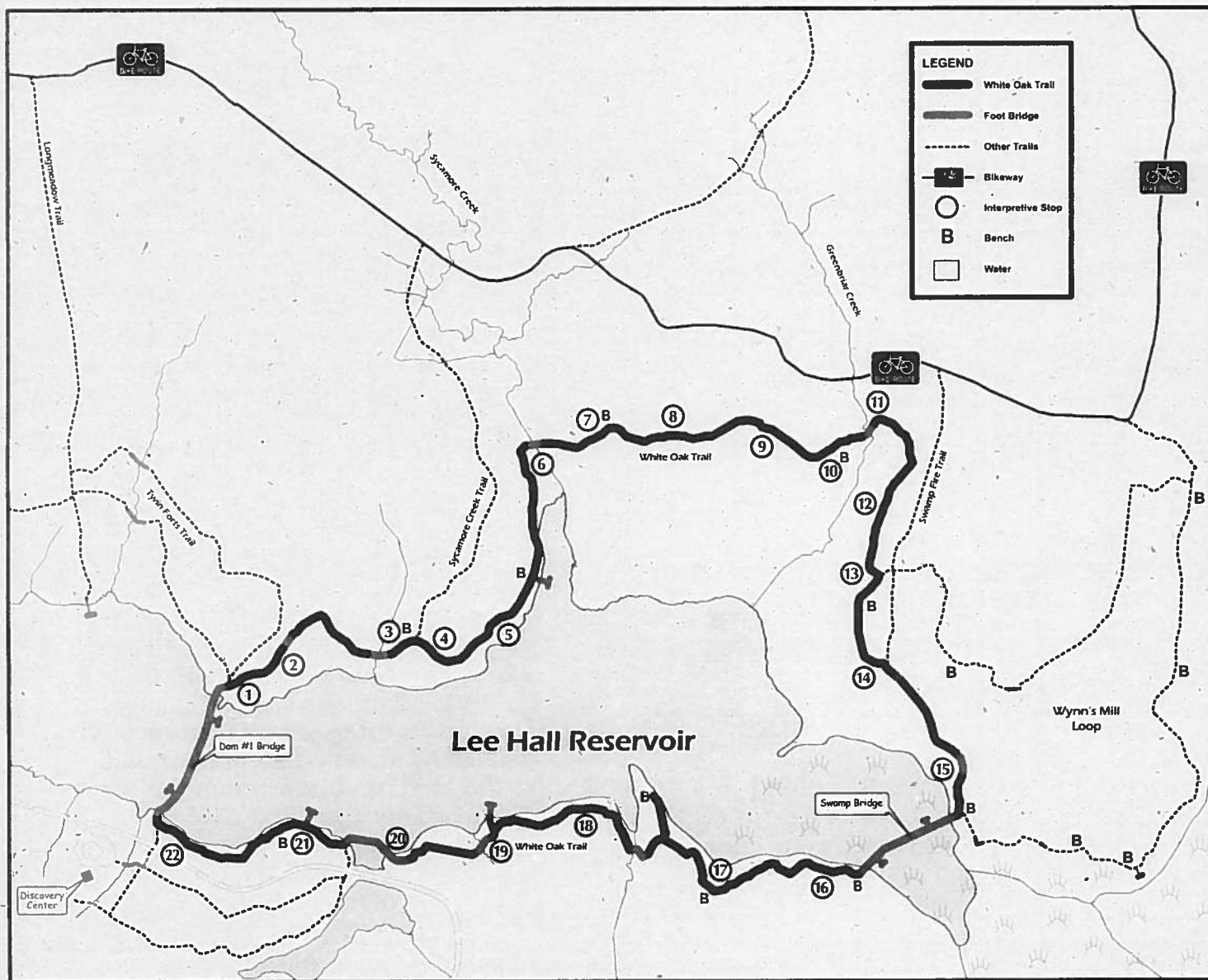
You may have noticed trees along the trail that have fallen or have been cut down. Some fell and were removed due to storm damage. Others were cut because they were dead and posed a danger of falling across the hiking trail. Much of the downed timber is left on-site, providing homes for wildlife and nutrients to the soil. Dead trees that don't pose a danger along trails or other park facilities are left standing for wildlife.

## 11. GREENBRIER

Greenbrier is a common woody vine that grows throughout the park. This prickly vine is a valuable source of food and shelter for wildlife. This vine, also known as common brier, deer brier, bamboo brier, or catbrier, can cause some nasty scratches if you get yourself tangled in it!

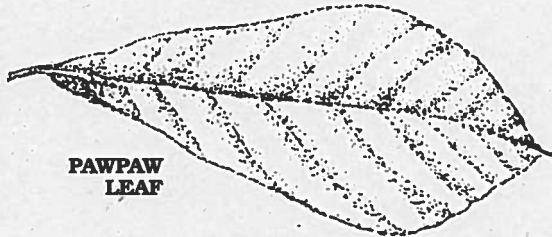
## 12. WATCH YOUR STEP!

Erosion is the wearing away of soil, caused by a combination of rainfall, slope of the land, and how much the ground is disturbed by use. Soil along any trail is disturbed as users travel over it. These tree roots have been exposed over the years by thousands of hikers walking the trail. The roots are nature's erosion control, helping to slow the loss of soil. Next time you stumble over a tree root take a moment to think about the role of plant roots in erosion control.



### 13. PAWPAW PATCH

The pawpaw is a large-leaved shrub that grows in patches, or colonies, along the trail. These colonies are formed from sprouts that grow off the roots of other pawpaws. Peek under the leaves in late summer and you may find the sweet-smelling fruit. Pawpaw is a northern growing member of the tropical custard-apple family. Its large yellow-green fruits are eaten by turkeys, foxes, raccoons, opossums and other animals.



*NOTE: YOU HAVE WALKED APPROXIMATELY 1.3 MILES. THIS IS THE MID-WAY POINT OF THE WHITE OAK TRAIL.*

### 14. WHAT MADE THOSE HOLES

The trunk of the tree directly behind this post is covered by hundreds of neat rows of small holes. These holes were made by the yellow-bellied sapsucker. The sapsucker uses its beak to bore holes into the inner bark of a tree. This allows the sap to escape and run down the tree. The bird returns again and again to eat the sap and insects attracted by the sap.

### GREAT BLUE HERONS IN PINES



### 15. THE SWAMP

Visit the swamp throughout the year to watch as it transforms with the seasons – stark gray of winter becomes a lush green tangle of summer growth, then fades to a seemingly “lifeless” area again as the weather gets cold. Always fascinating, the swamp is home to a multitude of plants and animals. Much of the swamp’s wildlife is nocturnal, which means they sleep during the day and come out to travel and feed during the night.

### 16. BEAVER ACTIVITY

Along the trail you’ll notice stumps with pointed tops. Beavers have chewed these trees, causing them to fall – the bark provides food and the trunks and limbs are used to build beaver lodges and dams. Beavers are nocturnal animals, but you may spot them on cloudy days or around dusk or dawn. Park personnel have wrapped the base of selected trees in wire hardware cloth; this was done to discourage beaver from chewing on these trees.



## 17. EASTERN REDCEDAR

The wood of the eastern redcedar is well known for its fragrant aroma and resistance to decay. Cedar chests and drawer liners, fence posts, and ornamental items are commonly constructed of redcedar. This particular tree is slowly dying but it will be with us for some time, providing berries and cover for small songbirds.

*You've probably noticed the golf course along the left side of this section of trail. Although most people think of a golf course in terms of human recreation, it is interesting to note that a large golf course provides abundant wildlife habitat – ponds, wooded areas, and open grassy fields. White-tail deer are commonly seen alongside the golfers on the Newport News Golf Club at Deer Run.*

## 18. AMERICAN BEECH

The leaves of the beech tree often remain attached to the tree's limbs long after they've turned brown in autumn. Early settlers used these dry leaves to stuff pillows and mattresses. The smooth bark of this tree is a beautiful pale gray. This smooth bark unfortunately invites people to carve designs and initials; this activity damages the tree's "skin" and may ultimately cause disease and fungus to kill the tree.

TUFTED TITMOUSE  
ON HAZEL ALDER



Relax a few moments at Swampview Point and enjoy the sounds of frogs and birds.

## 19. TRANSITION ZONE

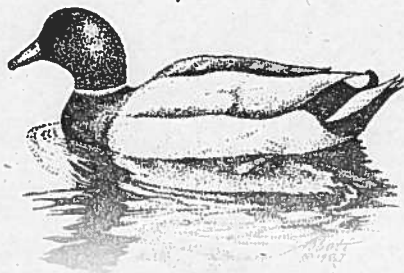
Across the water to your right you can see the transition zone where lake becomes swamp. Trees, shrubs and grasses appear, providing cover for resident and migratory waterfowl.

## 20. BASKING TURTLES

As you quietly cross this footbridge, you may see turtles sunning themselves on fallen logs. Too much activity and these shy creatures will quickly slip into the dark water.

## 21. LEE HALL RESERVOIR

Take a moment to enjoy the beauty of Lee Hall Reservoir. This 360-acre lake serves as a source of drinking water for local communities. Water level in the reservoir is dependent upon the amount of water pumped in through pipelines (like the one you can see across the water past the wooden bridge) and rainfall. Fishing enthusiasts can expect largemouth bass, crappie, chain pickerel, yellow perch, northern pike, catfish and bluegill to be biting. The calm waters invite kayakers and canoeists, while land lovers can stroll the reservoir shoreline.



MALE MALLARD

## 22. CAN YOU IDENTIFY THIS TREE?

Look at the flaky gray bark and lobed leaves of this tree. Does this tree look familiar? If you guessed white oak, you're right. With this tree we end our guided hike along the White Oak Nature Trail.

If you have questions or comments,  
please contact:

Newport News Park Discovery Center  
13560 Jefferson Avenue  
Newport News, VA 23602

Telephone:  
757-886-7916 or 757-886-7912  
Fax: 757-886-7918  
E-mail: [discover@nngov.com](mailto:discover@nngov.com)

For more information about other parks  
and programs offered by the Newport  
News Parks Division, visit our website at  
[www.nnparks.com](http://www.nnparks.com)

**WAIT! Don't throw this booklet away! If  
you do not plan to keep it as a souvenir  
of your visit to the park, please drop it  
off at the Discovery Center and we'll  
pass it on to another park visitor.  
THANK YOU!**